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Panel Agrees

CIA Disobeyed JFK on Cuba

By JOHN ROBERTS

A story of Central Intelligence Agency intrigue, including apparent disregard of a presidential directive, was related last night in a discussion at Wilmington High School.

Two Cubans, a Time-Life correspondent and a college professor gave their versions of events leading up to the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961 — a CIA-organized and directed disaster — during the fifth annual Dag Hammarskjold Memorial Lecture.

The program was sponsored by the Delaware Chapter of the United Nations Association.

The panelists told of conflicting views between Cubans urging revolt from within — a group led by Raul Chivas, one of the panelists — and those arguing for a frontal invasion, the group which the panelists said was supported by the CIA.

THE panel said the CIA backed former supporters of Fulgencio Batista, the Cuban dictator ousted by Fidel Castro, against the orders of President John F. Kennedy.

The result of this backing, the panel said, was to put Castro in an even stronger position after the ill-fated Cuban invasion.

Chivas, one-time captain in Castro's army, national treasurer of Castro's 26th of July Movement and administrator of railroads for Castro, said he was unsuccessful in efforts to dissuade the CIA from the invasion plan and persuade it to help anti-Castroites holed up in the Escambray Mountains.

THE response he received, in Chivas and his group," he Chivas said, was, "Who told them to go up into the mountains ... to revolt against Castro?"

"And I told them (CIA), 'What do you expect? That every lieutenant who is dissatisfied should come to Washington and ask permission to revolt?'" he continued.

Sam Halper, Time Magazine Caribbean Bureau chief, claimed "the Escambray front (underground) was allowed to die."

The Time correspondent, now on special assignment in Latin America, said that reading the appeals to the CIA from the men in the mountains is a "traumatic" experience.

"It's a story of men betrayed," he said, reporting that the CIA promised to drop supplies on a given date, then would wait until two weeks later with the inevitable result that the supplies seldom reached the men asking for them.

THE election of Kennedy and the influx of liberals into the nation's administration introduced a new orientation toward the Cuban invasion, Halper said.

Before then, he claimed, the orientation of the CIA and apparently of the Eisenhower administration had been to a group of Cubans who were right of center.

Although the plans for the invasion were approved by Kennedy with the proviso that the United States not become directly involved by providing air cover, "politically there was a big difference," Halper continued.

"Kennedy insisted on bringing

OUTWARDLY, Kennedy's wish was followed; actually, however, it was not, the panel agreed.

Chivas told of formation of a Cuban Council and agreement on three conditions for any invasion: That the military operations be in complete control of Cubans; that the underground be helped; and that known supporters of Batista be eliminated from the force. The agreement later was broken, he said.

The liberalization the White House ordered, however, never took place in the Guatemalan training camps where the invasion force was being trained, Halper said.

"As a matter of fact ... control of the camps was taken over by right wing groups and former Batistianos," he said.

THE result was that when the invasion took place and Castro

smashed the landing force, the Cuban dictator was able to parade before the Cuban public the former Batista men, many of whom had been Batista torturers, murderers and grafters Halper said.

Other panel participants were Eduardo Martinez, a former lieutenant in the Cuban rebel army and one-time action chief of 26th of July Movement; treasurer in Santiago, and Dr. Clement Moten, Temple University Latin American history professor and one of two editors of "Revista de Historia," official publication of the Commission of the History of the Organization of American States.